

# LONESTAR NEWS

SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION, 2BDE

FOB KALSU, IRAQ



February 15, 2006



## *Words from Lone Star 6*

Saba el Khayr, (Good Morning),

Another few weeks down and we are closer to two of our goals: transferring responsibility to the Iraqi government, army and people and coming home to our loved ones. We are also achieving our most important goal of keeping everyone safe.

Activity in our AO has hit its peaks and valleys these past two weeks. Millions of Muslims celebrated Ashura during the first few weeks of February. During the celebrations at least a million of them conducted a pilgrimage down the roads and through the towns in which we work. It was truly a sight to see.

Those peak periods of activity were thankfully followed by a few days where the Iraqi people as well as the insurgents seemed to take a break. The lack of activity was greatly welcomed by all.

Bulldog is struggling to install a communication link over distances and terrain which all manuals and textbooks say they shouldn't even try. Despite that, they have been asked to do the impossible and are just inches away from accomplishing that feat. Their ingenuity and hard work are paying off. Maybe one day we'll let them get some sleep.

Stalker is continuing to struggle with TUAV operations but none of it is their fault. They've worked through windstorms and sandstorms, muddy runways and electrical problems and have done a remarkable job. The Prowlers are continuing their jack-of-all ways and continue to help out wherever needed. In the past few weeks they've worked SIGINT (Signals Intelligence, listening to people over different mediums) missions, escorted patrols and pulled guard duty to keep us safe.

The Prophet / CGS platoon are working miracles and helping us put a lot of the insurgents into Abu Ghurayb prison, which is affectionately known by many other not-so-politically-correct terms. The Tactical HUMINT Teams and OMT are the final link to putting the insurgents where they belong. These Soldiers are working extensive hours to interrogate detainees, develop sources of information and help the brigade achieve its mission.

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FOX RECON Platoon show off their vehicle and their pearly white

## Promotions

SGT Queensbourrow

SGT Stross

SPC Curl

SPC Belfon

SPC Daley

SPC Shelton

PFC Gray

PFC Malinauskas

SPC Gamiao

PFC Donaldson

SPC Arons



Maintenance platoon working hard repairing our vehicles

February 2006

Headquarters and Headquarters company are also workhorses for us. The support platoon is pulling guard duty, escorting patrols and maintaining our vehicle fleet well above expectations. They are doing it all without complaint and deserve everyone's thanks. The mechanics are some of the busiest Soldiers in the Battalion. They work countless hours to keep our vehicles and generators working so we can accomplish all our missions. Often they get little recognition because we too often take their efforts for granted. I think they're happiest when covered with grease and having an engine pulled apart. At least that's when I see the biggest smiles on their faces. They are truly the un-sung heroes of the battalion. The military police platoon has been broken up but continues to serve the brigade in many ways. Some of our MPs are working in the detention facility (and have passed several inspections / visits with flying colors) while others are protecting Warhorse 6, the Brigade Commander. Both groups see a lot of time on the road, either conducting patrols to various meetings with Warhorse 6 or taking detainees to Abu Ghurayb.

The Lonestar MiTT, in their training of the Iraqi Soldiers, are truly doing a remarkable job that will have a great and lasting impact on this country as well they have managed to travel all over southern Iraq without getting lost once. They have made great strides in training their Iraqi counterparts and look forward to doing PT with them every other day. The training has included everything from weapons ranges to supply issues to briefing techniques, and all personnel involved are teaching and learning a vast amount each day. Working so closely with these Soldiers of the Iraqi Army has opened all of our eyes more to the culture and lifestyle of these fine, hardworking people. We've had the opportunity to dine with the Iraqis on several occasions and have come to actually enjoy some of their dishes. It took some getting used to, and some extra medicine to calm our stomachs, but it was all a superb adventure. One that we will not soon forget.

Environmental Morale Leave (commonly, but incorrectly, known as R&R) is in full swing and we have quite a few Soldiers enjoying some well-deserved rest. Please send them back when their time is up so that the rest of us can take a few weeks off. Don't forget that their sleep cycles may be quite a bit off so watch out if they fall asleep in their soup. Please keep them safe.

Finally, we must continue to thank everyone for the support, especially the mail, that hasn't stopped flowing. The Valentine's Day surprises that the chaplain helped coordinate and ya'll sent caused a lot of smiles on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Much better than the scowls that usually adorn certain faces. I think CSM Curtice even broke out a smile or two during the day.

Thanks for all your Support to our Soldiers, keep the mail and packages coming. You at home are our Heroes. Lone Star 6.

Here's some more **Private Talk** to enjoy:

*Have you ever been so late to work there was absolutely no excuse, what so ever? That was me this morning. I got to work about two hours late. Try explaining that to your NCO. I think that part of it may have been going on a run the night before last. I went to Abu Ghuryab, That's where the prison is. It was my second time out, but definitely just as intense as the first. I figure that no matter how many times you go out, it will still be a tense situation. I think that is probably a good thing though. Kind of keep you on your toes. Even though things seem to have slowed a bit, everyone should still have good situational awareness. We still have a long road ahead of us before we come home.*

*I guess I should give a little update on the chow situation here on FOB Kalsu. To be honest it is still good food, good service, and good serving times. Just one problem, it is the same food. The food does change every day, but it seems to be the same routine every week. One night is Mexican food, then Chinese, then fish, and so on. I find myself starting to eat more pizza and fried foods, here lately. Guess that doesn't go too well with my work out plan. I wanted to come home twenty pounds heavier. Looks like I might waddle home thirty pounds heavier. At least you know we are still eating well here.*

*We just had Valentines Day here. It seemed to go pretty good. Kind of funny watching computer illiterate people trying to work the internet to send presents. Not such an easy holiday when you can't just go to the store and buy flowers. I think the funniest was one of my own NCO's, who will remain nameless for my sake. He actually got all the way through his entire order and then sent it off to the wrong address. I guess someone will have a good Valentines Day. Don't ask how much he spent.*

*I am not too sure I did so well this Valentines Day. See I have my significant other deployed with me here on Kalsu. And being the not so intelligent person I am, I bought fake flowers. Yes, I know, probably not the best idea now that I think about it. You know you might not have done so well if they open the box and start laughing. Though she did give me a purple puppy dog, with pink ears. I know you would probably ask so I will tell you. Yes I put it on my bed, right on top of my koala blanket she bought for me. Now that's love. Otherwise things seem to be going ok here. Just trying to pass the time as fast as possible and still get the job done. Hope everyone had a good Valentines Day and we miss you all.*



## HHC Hurricanes

Another two weeks nipped in the bud; the Hurricanes continue to be overworked and undermanned. Actually a good thing, since idle time here is sloooooow time. In the past two weeks, in addition to the many daily missions run by the company, we had the privilege of promoting PV2 Donaldson and PV2 Malinauskas to Private First Class, and PFC's Belfon, Daley, and Shelton to Specialist. By the time you read this we will have also promoted SPC Queensbourrow and SPC Stross to Sergeant, a big step up in responsibility and respect within the military community. SGT Johnson and SGT Sims re-enlisted for another few years during a ceremony under the flag conducted by COL Tully. Glad to have them decide to stay with us for awhile, not that we'd let them leave right now anyway! Mail was backed-up for approximately a week because of the weather, causing much anxiety in the ranks.

Fortunately the skies have cleared and HHC is once again swamped with mail! Last week the Battalion held the first promotion board since deploying. The Hurricanes had six well deserving Specialists appear before the board, and all represented the company well and were recommended for promotion, not a small feat, since a board appearance is likely one of the most nerve racking experiences in a Soldier's career.

Congratulations to all! Weather-wise, it has slowly been heating up here, mid 70's most days. Actually very nice, which we will enjoy as long as it lasts. We wish to extend a Hurricane welcome to SSG Jara and his family. He is currently assisting with TOC duties, giving the 3-shop folks some relief. You may have heard a rumor of hazardous duty pay increasing in January. Turns out the anticipation was for naught, as it didn't materialize, so your spouses are not hiding the extra money! Thank you all who supported the Chaplain's Valentine Day efforts. Small things do mean a lot over here. It looks to be a busy next few weeks with several missions on the horizon in addition to our normal day-to-day duties. Keep the spirits high and the mail flowing!

1SG Hurricane 7



## Words from the Chaplain

Hola Lone Star Family, three months are gone already. The time is still going fast, however according to the professionals of human behavior, this is the time when combat stress starts to show, not only here in the combat zone but also at home. Especially in the families where spouses they are doing everything at home alone, it is very important to be aware of this. Do not permit these stressful times to break what a lot of hard work has built. That is the moment to take advantage of all of those different personnel that were mentioned in the pre-deployment briefings that are available to help. If you are feeling or seeing that your behavior is changing, if you start to feel tired of all of a sudden, or if communication with your loved ones starts to change, don't let continue. Instead, do something about it; look for some guidance, call the Chaplain in the rear, a ministry back home, or call somebody that you think can give to you good help. Here are some numbers that you can call: Duty Chaplain 254-287-CHAP (24/7)/ One Army Source 1-800-264-8107 (24/7), and you can also contact your Rear Detachment Chaplain. You can get information at [www.armyonesource.com](http://www.armyonesource.com). Don't wait until it is too late to look for help, "*just do it!*" (like Nike). Besides all of this, I advise to still keep praying all together to get through this deployment. May God Bless the Lone Star Family.

***"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.***

***I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress my God, in whom I trust."*** (Psalm 91)



LTC Muraski awards CH Hernandez with a well deserved award



### ***Alpha Company Stalkers***

The Shadow Stalkers are pressing ahead performing their mission throughout the Central region of Iraq. Aside from the frequent rain storms, life at Kalsu is getting better with new construction projects underway and more in the works. The Morale Football League regular season began on 29 JAN with a bang. Even down three players from 1st PLT (1LT Aptaker, SGT Thompson, and SPC Reeves) due to other mission requirements, the team was able to obliterate the Post Office team: 31 to 12. On 07 FEB 06, we played E Company of 2-8 INF. We played hard, but in the end, we lost 26 to 14. The Stalkers' hard work and dedication is reflected in all that we do, whether it's conducting a mission or even playing ball. Wish us luck next week as we play against A Company, 2-8 INF BN.

Prophet platoon welcomed Specialist Andrew Muehlbach this month and Specialist Christopher Hussey and Specialist Marshal McKee celebrated their birthdays this month.

Fox Platoon sends their greetings from FOB Kalsu! The missions continue to come down at least a few times a week, so we are staying busy over here. It really helps the time pass, and we are grateful for that. Before you know it we will be back home. In between missions we still stay busy playing sports, running and lifting weights. Occasionally we have time to play video games, watch movies and read. Sergeant First Class Lazaro and Specialist Saliba have recently started challenging each other at a soccer game on X-Box. We will have to wait to find out who will win in the end. 1LT Olzacki and crew would like to say thank you to everyone for sending packages and letters. It is amazing to see how much their spirits are lifted by your thoughtful gestures.

This has been a very productive time for the three Tactical HUMINT Teams. Staff Sergeant Knight arrived last week and is instilling his team with a sense of purpose, motivation and direction. Specialist Harshner was recently promoted and Sergeant Daniel finally got the paperwork for his stripes. Specialist Esponde reenlisted and is doing some excellent work.

The weather continues to try to thwart the TUAV platoon's best efforts to provide the Brigade with real time imagery intelligence. The platoon continues to battle the flood waters as they threaten to overtake the Launch and Recovery Site as the rains continue to come. Despite the wetness, the platoon keeps busy by trying to surf on the Air Force Pallets that are floating in the giant puddles around the runway. The platoon said a temporary "goodbye" to SGT McDonald, newly promoted SPC Gamiao and SPC Wisniewski as they are the first of the platoon to head back to their loved ones for R&R Leave. We had two promotions this month, SPC Gamiao (as already mentioned) and SPC Arons have received the promotions they deserve and are eager to start playing a bigger leadership role within the platoon.

**STALKERS LEAD THE WAY!**



SPC Esponde pledges more years to the Army



UAV platoon shows off their airfield/mud hole



SPC Gamiao and SPC Arons enjoy their new rank



## ***Bravo Company Bulldogs***

Hello from Iraq. Since the last update we have promoted three Soldiers. PFC Curl was promoted to Specialist and PV2 Gray was promoted to PFC. SPC Evans was laterally promoted to Corporal.

We have tackled a couple of our lingering issues with the help of the 204th Support Battalion. They helped 1st Platoon construct a giant communications tower to mount some antennas on to improve our radio links between some of our FOBs.

We have also had a number of Soldiers recognized for outstanding achievement. PFC Deedon was presented with the 4ID CSM's coin of excellence and SGT Diaz, SPC Hintz, PFC Rakes and PFC Smith all received the CG's coin of excellence. Four Soldiers, SGT Valdez, SPC Alexander, SPC Lewis and PFC Richardson received coins from the commander of the 204th Support Battalion for their work on the communications tower. Finally, WO1 Boucher received a coin of excellence from the commander of the 4th Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade.

We have sent our first four Soldiers on leave and have five more scheduled throughout the remainder of the month. This is a great program and I am glad that we can get them a much deserved break. We will have enough slots to offer leave to everyone in the company, however a few have already indicated that they do not want to take leave and would prefer to take an in-theater four day pass instead. Either way we will get everyone some down time during the deployment.

I am going to continue the spotlight on our communications services with our 25S's. These Soldiers install, operate and maintain the satellite transmission systems that connect our Joint Network Nodes to each other and the outside world. The satellite systems are a new system and have replaced the line of sight radio systems as the primary backbone links in our network. By fielding these systems and Soldiers to the brigade, we have eliminated the constraints of terrain and distance when planning the placement of our command posts, which allows greater freedom to the brigade and battalions in accomplishing their missions. All of these Soldiers are performing superbly and as a result we have had nothing but success with these systems.

The Soldiers are still doing great and are getting better at their jobs with each day of real world experience.

**Bulldog 6 out**



***A Sight to Behold:*** One of B Co's Communication Tower



**PFC Curl gets promoted to SPC**



**PVT Gray gets promoted to PFC**